Democrats' anti-Russia campaign leaves most Americans unmoved

Barry Grey
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In the aftermath of Donald Trump's meeting in Helsinki with Vladimir Putin, the Democratic Party and the bulk of the American media have relentlessly attacked the US president, branding him a traitor or Kremlin stooge. With virtual unanimity, the press has condemned Trump for "selling out America" by questioning the claims of the US intelligence agencies that Russia intervened in the 2016 presidential election to secure Trump's victory.

Despite the hysteria whipped up inside the Beltway and among the affluent sections of the upper-middle class aligned with the Democratic Party, the Democrats' anti-Russia campaign is finding no significant response among the broad mass of the American people.

While opinion polls conducted after the Helsinki summit report divergent results, one, a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll, registers a one percentage point rise in Trump's approval rating compared to June, bringing it to 45 percent, the highest mark of his presidency.

At the same time, the poll shows broad popular opposition to the right-wing policies of the Trump administration. Fifty-one percent of voters disagree with Trump's handling of border security, according to the survey, and 58 percent oppose the separation of immigrant children from their parents and their confinement in detention camps.

Another poll conducted after the Helsinki summit, this one by the *Washington Post* and ABC News, reports that more than half of Americans approve of Trump's handling of the meeting.

It is always necessary to treat with skepticism polls conducted by the capitalist media, which are themselves part of the internal warfare in Washington. Other polls show Trump's approval rating falling, and there is no doubt that he remains deeply hated.

It is clear, however, that the Democrats' campaign over Russian "meddling" is not evoking a popular response. If the Democrats were to call demonstrations under their preferred slogans—"All the way with the CIA!," "War with Russia!" or, perhaps, "God Bless the Deep State!"—it would not produce a significant turnout. The broad mass of the American population is not in favor of war. They know, moreover, why they voted the way they did in 2016, and it had nothing to do with Putin.

The two presidential candidates in 2016 were the most unpopular in US electoral history. Masses of workers felt they had been conned by Obama and turned away from the Democrats in disgust after his eight years of war, austerity and handouts to the bankers.

They saw Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton for what she was—a corrupt pawn of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus. When Bernie Sanders carried out his pre-planned capitulation and backed Clinton, Trump was given free rein to demagogically appeal to anti-establishment sentiment, including among sections of workers devastated by plant closures and layoffs.

The Democrats resorted to the fiction of Russian "meddling" and Trump "collusion" in 2016 because they were incapable of offering any policies to address the real concerns of working people, whom Clinton treated with barely concealed contempt. They are today even less able to make a popular appeal based on the concerns of workers and youth. Instead, they repeat the very approach that produced their electoral debacle in 2016.

Indeed, the Democrats hope that one consequence of the media hysteria over the Helsinki summit is that it

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will allow them to center their 2018 election campaigns on the issue. The *Washington Post* reported last week, "Citing polls and focus groups that have put Trump and Russia far down the list of voter priorities, Democratic strategists have counseled candidates and party leaders for months to discuss 'kitchen table' issues. Now… those strategists believe the ground may have shifted."

Since Trump's election, the Democrats have devoted their energies to undermining and suppressing the mass opposition that exists to the fascistic billionaire. They were terrified by the mass protests that erupted at the time of Trump's inauguration and the wave of teachers' strikes that occurred earlier this year. They have worked single-mindedly to channel social and political discontent behind a program of military confrontation with Russia, Internet censorship and defense of the military-intelligence "deep state."

This raises very real dangers. The Democrats' pro-war hysteria following the Helsinki summit has only burnished Trump's anti-establishment credentials, serving to legitimize his brand of right-wing nationalism. The entirely right-wing, pro-war character of the Democrats' opposition to Trump underscores the impossibility of the sentiments and interests of the working class finding any expression within the framework of the capitalist two-party system.

The Democrats speak for the predominant factions of the US intelligence complex and sections of the military command and financial elite who oppose any retreat from the aggressive policy against Russia initiated by the Obama administration. They are seeking to manipulate public opinion by resurrecting a narrative of anti-Russian hysteria that goes back to the days of Joe McCarthy and the John Birch Society.

Trump, on the other hand, speaks for a faction of the ruling class that favors leveraging the United States' preeminent position in the global economy and geopolitical order to reverse Washington's trade deficits and supports a temporary accommodation with Moscow in return for Russia's acceptance of a US-led war against Iran.

This basic unanimity of the two parties on war and reaction is demonstrated by the overwhelming bipartisan support for the near-record $717 billion military budget that is rapidly moving through Congress.

There is, however, another opposition to Trump that is of a completely different and opposed social character. It is rooted in the working class, the only social force capable of mobilizing behind it all progressive sections of society in a struggle against war, inequality and authoritarianism.

The upsurge of teachers in the US, part of an international revival of class struggle, has shown that the ability of the trade unions to suppress working-class opposition is breaking down. This resistance must be broadened and given organizational and political expression through the building of new organs of working-class struggle—rank-and-file factory and neighborhood committees—and a socialist, revolutionary and internationalist program directed against all of the parties and politicians of the ruling class and the capitalist system they defend.

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